

Do my colleagues forget? Remember what Donald Trump did? Was he interested in a free, open, fair election? Donald Trump tried to pressure local officials to overturn a democratic election in America. It was a stress test on our democracy unlike any in recent history, but our institutions held. So now what do Republicans want to do? Change the results. Change the election officials.

Again, Trump tried to pressure local officials to overturn democratic elections in a huge stress test on our democracy. Our institutions held. Local officials certified election results. The courts rejected spurious claims of fraud. Vice President Pence, no less, opened the proper envelopes. The House and Senate came together to count the results of the electoral college in the immediate aftermath of an armed insurrection.

Now—now—because they couldn't win the election and our institutions, our democratic—small “d,” democratic—institutions held, they want to change who is running the elections to be partisan and biased. Republican State legislatures are actively removing many of the barriers that prevented Donald Trump from subverting our elections. Shame. Shame. Shame.

I lay all this information at the feet of my Republican colleagues: a sweeping effort to disenfranchise millions of voters, mostly Black and Brown students, the working poor; an attack on the checks that held our democracy together in the face of Donald Trump's assaults. Many of us wondered: Will these institutions hold? Would Trump-appointed judges tell the Trump lawyers that they were full of bunk and there wasn't fraud? They did. It was a glorious moment for our democracy, and the Republican majority here in the Senate wants to undo it and doesn't even want to debate it.

We can argue what should be done to protect voting rights and safeguard our democracy, but don't you think we should be able to debate the issue? The vote tomorrow is on, to my people watching. It is called a motion to proceed. It is how we get bills on the floor of the Senate. It needs 60 votes to be able to be debated. Will our Republicans let us debate it? That is the only question on the table for the U.S. Senate tomorrow, and we are about to find out how my Republican colleagues will answer that question.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, later this week, President Biden will meet with leaders of the Afghanistan civilian democratic government. It doesn't take an administrative leak to know what will be on the agenda.

President Ghani and Chairman Abdullah Abdullah will arrive in Washington as a grave situation in their country rapidly deteriorates.

The strategic and moral consequences of President Biden's decision to abandon Afghanistan are already coming painfully into focus. Without air cover and with reduced support from the U.S.-led coalition, our Afghan partners are struggling to hold back the Taliban onslaught.

In just the 2 months since the President's announcement, extremist militants have retaken control of at least 30—30—of Afghanistan's administrative districts. Reports from the ground indicate that their heavy-handed, medieval rule is already creating new nightmares, especially for Afghan women and girls. And just last week, more than 20 of the elite, U.S.-trained special forces, who represent the country's best hope of resistance, were literally slaughtered in a Taliban raid. So it is getting harder and harder to believe that “over-the-horizon” support will be enough to help our Afghan partners sustain the fight against these terrorist threats. It is already clear it would intensify challenges to our own national security.

This spring, the intelligence community warned that the Taliban was “likely to make gains on the battlefield.” As the Director of the CIA put it, “ability to collect and act on threats will diminish.” Now senior defense officials are portraying follow-on threats like the resurgence of al-Qaida as not a matter of if but when.

Last week, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs acknowledged that al-Qaida still seeks to directly threaten the United States and that it could have the necessary capabilities to do so in 2 years—or even less in the case of a Taliban victory in Kabul.

They want to know how we plan to support their defensive campaign without the air support that literally saves soldiers' lives. They want to know how we plan to contribute to urgent counterterrorism missions without a robust system for collecting intelligence on the ground. And if President Biden is unwilling to reverse course, they want to know who will help protect their fellow citizens forced to flee by the Taliban's conquest.

The State Department is not prepared to efficiently process visa claims from the many Afghans who have worked closely with our personnel, let alone the massive flows of refugees already on the move. Where are the friends of America to turn? Where will they turn?

It is time for President Biden to acknowledge the consequences of his decision: that a refugee crisis in Afghanistan will mean senseless suffering; that the collapse of the Afghan state will mean a security and economic crisis across the region, a crisis America and its partners will simply be unable to ignore; that the fallout of our retreat

will draw attention and resources away from even greater strategic threats from Russia and China; and that every bit of it would have been avoidable, totally avoidable.

FOR THE PEOPLE ACT OF 2021

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Madam President, on another matter, as I have noted before, Senate Democrats entered June with an agenda that was designed to fail. Our Democratic leader planned votes on a host of the left's most radical priorities. None of it was ever intended to clear the Senate's appropriately high bar for advancing legislation. Instead, the failure of their partisan agenda was meant to show somehow—somehow—that the Senate itself was failing.

For months, our colleagues built anticipation for the failure. They even started previewing the latest argument they have made when it happened. Apparently, the same Senate rule a Democratic minority had used with abandon was now somehow a racist relic to be abandoned by a Democratic majority.

In the end, one particular radical proposal took priority. S. 1 is the same bad bill it has been since the House introduced its version back in 2019 with the same nakedly partisan motives. But ever since Democrats got the election outcome they wanted last fall, we have watched our colleagues actually update the rationale for their latest partisan power grab: States must be stopped from exercising control over their own election laws.

The arguments here have one big thing in common with the ones our colleagues have deployed against the filibuster: debunked claims of racism.

Remember, the last Presidential election saw the highest voter turnout in decades, even amidst a once-in-a-century pandemic, and African-American turnout was twice as high in Mississippi as it was in Massachusetts. But when Georgia passed targeted updates to its election laws based on lessons learned during the pandemic-era elections, Democrats trashed the bill as a “redux of Jim Crow.” They misrepresented its contents so wildly that even left-leaning “fact-checks” repeatedly debunked these claims. But by then, the train of disinformation had left the station. Pretty soon, any State that dared to deviate from unique, pandemic-era procedures faced summary judgment in the court of liberal outrage. It hasn't seemed to matter that the facts tell a different story.

The bill that led Texas Democrats to exercise the rights of a legislative minority last month requires more counties to adhere to new minimum hours for early voting. The Oklahoma bill that expanded early voting for general elections was passed by a Republican legislature and signed by a Republican Governor. In my State of Kentucky, the expansion of both online registration and early voting this spring passed